

Message Text

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UNCLAS BEIRUT 2054

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BENC, BTIO
SUBJECT: REBUILDING THE CENTER OF BEIRUT -- AN OPPORTUNITY FOR
AMERICAN BUSINESS

1. DCM MET WITH GOL MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AMIN BIZRI APR 28. BIZRI GAVE DETAILED EXPLANATION OF GOL'S CURRENT PLANS TO REBUILD THE CENTRAL AREA OF BEIRUT WHICH WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED DURING 18 MONTHS OF FIGHTING. WITH THE HELP OF A FRENCH TEAM, GOL OFFICIALS HAVE MADE A BLOCK-BY-BLOCK, HOUSE-BY-HOUSE SURVEY AND DRAWN UP A PLAN INDICATING WHICH AREAS ARE TO BE REPAIRED AND WHICH MUST BE RAZED AND TOTALLY REBUILT. AS PART OF THIS MAJOR RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT, THE GOL INTENDS TO CONSTRUCT A NUMBER OF MAJOR NEW TRAFFIC ARTERIES WHICH WILL CARRY TRAFFIC INTO AND AROUND THE CENTRAL CITY DISTRICT.
2. BIZRI SAID THAT REBUILDING OF CENTER CITY WAS VITAL TO THE ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY OF LEBANON SINCE BEIRUT WAS A SYMBOL OF HHE COUNTRY'S UNITY. THE JOB THAT MUST BE DONE IS EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT BECAUSE THE NEW ROAD NETWORK WILL HAVE TO BE CONSTRUCTED WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TEMPORARY FACILITIES ARE MADE AVAILABLE TO ENABLE PEOPLE TO GET IN AND OUT OF TOWN WHILE THIS CONSTRUCTION IS GOING ON. BIZRI ALSO STRESSED THE NEED FOR SPEED. HE SAID "WE CANNOT WAIT FIVE YEARS OR IT WILL BE TOO LATE. WE MUST COMPLETE THE JOB IN TWO YEARS."

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3. BIZRI SAID THAT HIS ENGINEERS WILL HAVE COMPLETED THE PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND ENGINEERING STUDY INDICATING WHERE THE NEW ROADS WOULD GO, HOW WIDE THEY WILL BE, AND HOW MUCH ROADWAY WILL HAVE TO BE CINSTRICTED BY THE END OF JUNE. THE GOL IS ALREADY DISCUSSING WITH THE ARAB FUND FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT THE FINANCING FOR THIS PROJECT. BIZRI SAID THAT HE NEEDS A LARGE, EXPERIENCED FIRM TO DO THE JOB. IN HIS VIEW, AN AMERICAN

CONSTRUCTION/ENGINEERING FIRM THAT HAD EXPERIENCE IN THE REBUILDING OF AN URBAN ROAD NETWORK, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES SO THAT THE CITY COULD CONTINUE TO FUNCTION DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD WOULD BE THE MOST QUALIFIED TO UNDERTAKE THIS PROJECT. HE SAID HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HEARING FROM SUCH FIRMS.

4. COMMENT: IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE CONVERSATION THAT THE FINAL DETAILS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROAD NETWORK AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES IN CENTRAL BEIRUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN WORKED OUT. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOL MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS UNDER BIZRI (WHO HAS THE REPUTATION OF BEING ONE OF THE BEST ENGINEERS IN LEBANON), HAS MADE REMARKABLE PROGRESS CONSIDERING THE HANDICAPS UNDER WHICH IT HAS HAD TO WORK. ALTHOUGH THE MINISTER'S TARGET DATE OF JUNE 30 FOR COMPLETION OF THE PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING WORK MAY SLIP, THE GOL SEEMS DETERMINED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THE REBUILDING OF DOWNTOWN BEIRUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REASONS THAT BIZRI MENTIONED. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT COMMERCE PASS THE ABOVE INFORMATION TO A FEW CAREFULLY-SELECTED CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING FIRMS WHICH HAVE EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN URBAN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION. THESE FIRMS SHOULD BE URGED TO GET IN TOUCH DIRECTLY WITH MINISTER BIZRI AND MR. MOHAMMAD ATALLAH, THE DIRECTOR OF THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, P.O. BOX 3869, BEIRUT, INFORMING THEM OF THEIR INTEREST IN UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT AND ENCLOSING INFORMATION SHOWING THEIR EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE. IT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF THESE FIRMS TO VISIT BEIRUT AND MEET PERSONALLY WITH BIZRI AND ATALLAH AND POSSIBLY OTHERS. THE EMBASSY WILL OF COURSE ASSIST IN ARRANGING THESE APPOINTMENTS

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AND IN ANY OTHER WAY THAT IT APPROPRIATELY CAN.
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